Why Lost and Found matters in the Hospitality Industry

What happens when a frantic guest calls after checking out of your hotel to report that they left something behind in their room? Does your property have a well-defined efficient process for handling items reported lost or left behind by a guest? Did you know the average number of items lost each year in a hotel is more than 960 for every 100 guest rooms?

Lost and Found is often overlooked as a customer service component that can make or break brand loyalty. It is often the forgotten customer service factor in the Hospitality Industry. Lost and Found should be as important, efficient and customer service oriented as your Front Desk staff.

A lost item and how you treat its owner, will leave a lasting impression and it may be the last thing that they remember about your hotel. According to Wakefield Research in a February 2013 national survey of consumers, 1 in 3 travelers would consider switching hotel brands to a hotel that offers state of the art Lost and Found services and a whopping 66% would either change or consider changing hotel brands that offer a complete, efficient and cost effective Lost and Found service.

Providing your customers with the best possible experience when they lose a personal item starts with establishing written procedures detailing the lost and found process. Better yet consider creating a “Best Practice” protocol for Lost and Found services at your property. Developing a best practice protocol is easy, it should include these suggestions:

- Centralize the lost and found process, make one person or department responsible and accountable.
- Develop an inventory control system for all items with a complete chain of custody for all activity relating to each item.
- Provide an easy process for your staff to record and turn in found items. Consider “bagging and tagging” each item. Important information should be included with each item found including; date found; area or room number; current location, the employee who found the item and a brief description.
- Create a reporting document similar to the found items form for lost items reported by a guest that can be filled out by housekeeping, the front desk or a phone operator.
- Establish a centralized, secure “holding” location for all items.
- Develop security procedures to safeguard found items, especially items with high value.
- Use the most cost effective shipper for returning a guests found item(s).
- Use the United States Postal Service, UPS or FedEx which provide package tracking of returned items.
- If you are charging customers for the return of an item implement safety measures to secure guest personal and credit card payment information.
- Document every item picked up in person at your hotel. Require an ID and a signature before handing over an item.
- Be proactive, communicate as quickly as possible with your guests and let them know the status of their report, this is especially important if their item was not found.
Why Lost and Found matters in the Hospitality Industry

- Train all hotel staff who may be in contact with a guest, highlighting the importance and benefits of your Lost and Found protocol and the importance in providing outstanding customer service.

You ensure that your hotel is clean, that your food service is of the highest quality and your staff is highly trained in guest services. Implementing a first class lost and found process outlined in this article will complete the customer service experience.

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*Chargerback is the leader in providing a complete end-to-end state of the art Lost and Found solution. Please visit [www.chargerback.com](http://www.chargerback.com) to join the growing list of hotels that provide 100% satisfaction to their guests.*